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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600
28 August 1966

PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
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HIGHLIGHTS

Viet Cong terrorism intensified over the weekend both in Saigon and in the provinces. Despite Viet Cong efforts, government leaders expect a good turnout for the 11 September elections.

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I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
US forces discovered a four-battalion enemy base complex during the conduct of Operation TOLEDO/DECK HOUSE III in Phuoc Tuy Province (Para. 2). Multibattalion ARVN task force elements favorably terminated two major search-and-destroy operations in delta provinces of Kien Giang and Dinh Tuong (Para. 3). Weekend Viet Cong activity was highlighted by the mining and sinking of a South Vietnamese Navy minesweeper operating along the main shipping channel to Saigon and by intensified terrorism in the capital and elsewhere (Paras. 4-6).

II. The Political Situation in South Vietnam:
More reports indicate that the Viet Cong intend a major effort to disrupt the 11 September election (Paras. 1-3). Despite evidence of planned Communist harassment, government officials are predicting a heavy turnout (Paras. 4-5). Military leaders agreed at a 26 August Armed Forces Council meeting that intensified security operations would be needed to protect voters (Paras. 5-6). A southern Buddhist leader told a US official he has decided to vote in the election (Paras. 7-8). Leaders at the Buddhist Institute intend to go ahead with plans to disrupt the elections (Para. 9). The leader of the "Catholic Citizens Bloc" took an equivocal position on the elections at a 28 August press conference in Saigon (Paras. 10-11). FULRO negotiators are going to Cambodia to consult with their leader and arrange for

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the return of the first dissident contingent to South Vietnam (Paras. 12-13).

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[redacted] Viet Cong are infiltrating Buddhist "struggle" forces movement (Para. 16).

III. North Vietnamese Military Developments: North Vietnam continues to obtain sufficient petroleum for its needs (Paras. 1-2). Extensive wire communications line construction is going on in North Vietnam along transportation routes used for shipments to Laos and South Vietnam (Paras. 3-5). Three US aircraft were lost over the weekend in air strikes against North Vietnam (Paras. 6-8). US Navy pilots reported attacking three DRV PT boats on 28 August (Paras. 9-10).

IV. Other Communist Military Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.

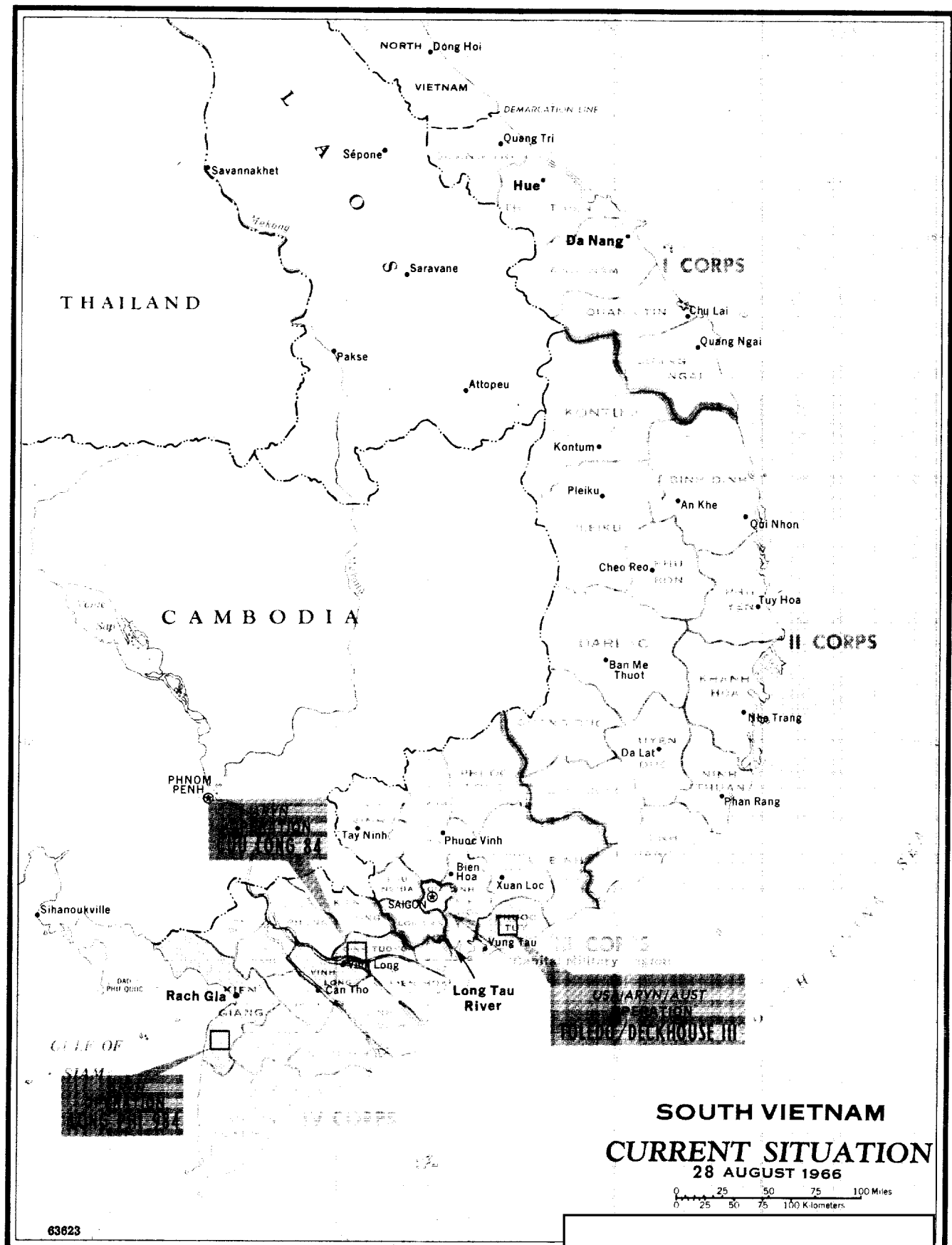
V. Communist Political Developments:

[redacted] has provided some details on evacuation, conditions in Hanoi, and military convoys (Paras. 3-4). Moscow has given unusual publicity to its training of DRV jet pilots (Para. 5).

VI. Other Major Aspects: The North Vietnamese are pushing for a rider to the Cambodian border agreement stating that the boundary will be subject to further examination (Paras. 1-4).

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Allied forces this weekend continued to press 34 battalion-sized or larger search-and-destroy operations against Viet Cong/North Vietnamese Army units in widespread sections of South Vietnam. However, no major ground combat actions were reported.

2. US forces participating in Operation TOLEDO/DECK HOUSE III southeast of Saigon in Phuoc Tuy Province discovered four battalion-sized enemy base camps containing several buildings, classrooms, and assorted caches on 27 August. Included among the caches were large quantities of documents, ammunition, clothing, and medical supplies.

3. South Vietnamese regulars have favorably terminated two large-scale search-and-destroy operations in the Mekong Delta. Operation LONG PHI 984, a three-day ground sweep conducted by six ARVN battalions approximately 20 miles southwest of Rach Gia, the capital of Kien Giang Province, ended on 26 August with reported Viet Cong losses of 132 killed and seven captured, as against government casualties of 34 killed, 54 wounded, and one missing. In Dinh Tuong Province, 42 miles southwest of Saigon, two-battalion ARVN Operation CUU LONG 84 conducted during 27-28 August resulted in 35 Communists killed and four captured. Friendly losses were placed at six killed and 20 wounded (one US).

Viet Cong Activity

4. Viet Cong sabotage efforts against allied shipping transiting the main shipping channel to Saigon continued this weekend, highlighted by the demolition and sinking of a South Vietnamese Navy minesweeper during the early evening of 27 August. The 50-foot Vietnamese motor launch was demolished by an electrically detonated mine while conducting routine

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minesweeping operations along the Long Tau River, some 18 miles southeast of Saigon and five miles from the site where the US merchantman Baton Rouge Victory was sunk on 22 August. Of the minesweeper's crew of seven--two US and five Vietnamese Navy personnel--one US was wounded; two Vietnamese were wounded, and one is missing.

5. The over-all pattern and incidence of Communist activity over the weekend generally tended to reinforce US and GVN estimates of an anticipated major upsurge in Viet Cong terrorism aimed at undermining the constituent assembly elections scheduled for 11 September. On 28 August, a terrorist mine exploded in a Saigon newspaper stall at an intersection only a block from the office of Premier Ky. The explosive charge was apparently targeted against Vietnamese cadets of the nearby Thu Duc Military Academy who normally wait for buses at the stall. One officer cadet was injured. Shortly thereafter, ordnance experts discovered a 25-pound Claymore-type fragmentation mine and two hand grenades in the same general area. A running gun battle was reported on the same day between Vietnamese policemen and a band of about 30 terrorists in the capital's Chinese quarter, Cholon. One policeman was killed and three others wounded, while the terrorists escaped down crowded sidestreets apparently without casualties.

6. In Vinh Long Province, 60 miles southwest of Saigon, ten ARVN soldiers and five Vietnamese civilians were killed and nine ARVN and one civilian wounded when the bus in which they were riding detonated a Communist land mine. In Vietnam's northern I Corps area, two government officials were reportedly assassinated during a terrorist raid on two refugee hamlets near Hue. Additionally, a supply train en route from Da Nang to Hue was reportedly mined and derailed.

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II. POLITICAL SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Reports continue to accumulate indicating that the Viet Cong intend to make a major effort to disrupt the 11 September election for a constituent assembly.

2. The Communist campaign thus far continues to focus on propaganda attacks asserting that the election is "illegal" and on threats against voters and others who participate in the electoral process. Reports continue to be received, however, of Communist plans for even more forceful efforts to harass the election, including attacks on polling places, blocking roads and waterways to prevent voters from going to the polls, and the seizure of voter identification cards.

3. There have been several assassinations in villages and bombings in recent days which may be related to the election. The Communist campaign was underlined in a 26 August Liberation Radio broadcast which linked recent Viet Cong military actions in the Saigon - Gia Dinh area with the effort to "frustrate the election farce."

4. Despite the evidence of planned Communist harassment, government officials in Saigon and the provinces are predicting a heavy voter turnout, ranging between 60 and 80 percent of the eligibles. In the provinces, government precautions to counter Communist plans including stepped-up security measures and withholding of voter registration cards until election day. US officials report that the government is making a concerted effort to promote the election in some northern provinces but the drive in the central lowlands appears to be less energetic. The election campaign there has been slow getting started, and it is unlikely that candidates will venture out of the towns into rural areas.

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Armed Forces Council Meeting

5. Election problems were discussed at a 26 August meeting of the Armed Forces Council comprised of senior commanders. The military leaders agreed that intensified military and police operations would have to be mounted during the two-week official campaign period to protect voters, candidates, and polling places. The council estimated that despite the anticipated Viet Cong spoiling effort, between three and five million votes will be cast on 11 September. It estimated that the turnout would run between 65 and 75 percent of eligible voters in the III Corps area, which includes Saigon and Cholon.

6. Major General Nguyen Bao Tri, minister of information, cautioned the corps and divisional commanders at the meeting to maintain a scrupulous impartiality and to do nothing which might appear designed to influence the voters. Several military reassignments were also discussed at the meeting, but an announcement of command changes will be postponed until after the election in order to forestall disruptive political speculation.

Buddhists and the Election

7. Southern Buddhist lay leader Mai Tho Truyen recently told a US official that he has decided to vote in the election. Truyen said that he had originally intended to boycott the election because of his opposition to the Ky government, but had reconsidered when the election became a major issue with the Viet Cong. He said that he and a number of his "friends" had decided they must "demonstrate" opposition to the Communists by voting. Truyen indicated, however, that he did not intend to publicize his stand on the election, arguing that other Buddhists "all know my views."

8. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] monks as well as laymen there have decided to participate in the elections because it has become a critical issue between non-Communist Vietnamese and the Viet Cong.

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9. According to a South Vietnamese official, several senior Buddhist leaders decided at a meeting in the Buddhist Institute on 21 August that they would not call for street demonstrations prior to the election but would instruct their followers to express opposition by destroying or incorrectly marking their ballots. This tactic, of invalidating ballots rather than staying away from the polls, may be a precaution against government identification of participants in a boycott.

Catholics and the Election

10. Father Tran Du, leader of the "Catholic Citizens Bloc," took an equivocal position on the elections at a 28 August press conference in Saigon. Father Du said that the bloc, which he claimed is an "altruistic" group representing two million Catholics, is prepared to declare the forthcoming elected constituent assembly a "minority creation" unless the government agrees to a "national consensus." He argued that the bloc only seeks to remind the government of its promise to take actions which would create an "atmosphere favorable to democracy"--an apparent reference to the bloc's 10 August note demanding the release of political prisoners. He asserted that the bloc had not yet decided on what its position on the election will be if the government does not meet its demands.

11. Meanwhile, two civilian Catholic members of the ruling Directorate told a US official that the government would probably not release the prisoners in the near future. They asserted that the disposition of the political prisoners would have to be settled eventually, but that the government should not act precipitately on such a complex problem. They argued that it was important to get through the elections with a minimum of "dramatics" and that the prisoner issue could be settled afterwards.

FULRO Negotiations

12. During 24-25 August talks with South Vietnamese commissioner for montagnard affairs, Paul Nur,

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[redacted]

negotiator for the dissident tribal independence group FULRO agreed that the initial steps leading to the dissidents' eventual return to the government could not proceed. They argued, however, that further steps would depend on the government's promulgating a decree spelling out the promised special statute for the montagnards.

13. The FULRO group was scheduled to leave for Cambodia on 26 August to confer with their leader, Y-Bham Enoul, and arrange for the return of the first dissident FULRO contingents to South Vietnam.

Tri Quang

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14. [redacted]

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15. A number of handbills were distributed in Saigon this weekend stating that Tri Quang intended to immolate himself on 27 August. The handbills are believed to have been put out by the government to discredit Tri Quang. Several sources assert that the Buddhist leader has no intention of burning himself to death.

Viet Cong and the Struggle Forces

16. [redacted]

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25X1 [redacted] Communists from the Da Nang area held a special meeting on 16 August to discuss new orders from Military Region 5, the Viet Cong command in the northern provinces. The Communists were ordered to support the Buddhist "struggle" forces program, and to tailor their terrorism so that it cannot be attributed to the essentially nonviolent "struggle" forces. [redacted] Ha Xuan Ky, an alleged

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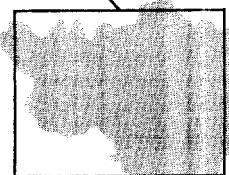
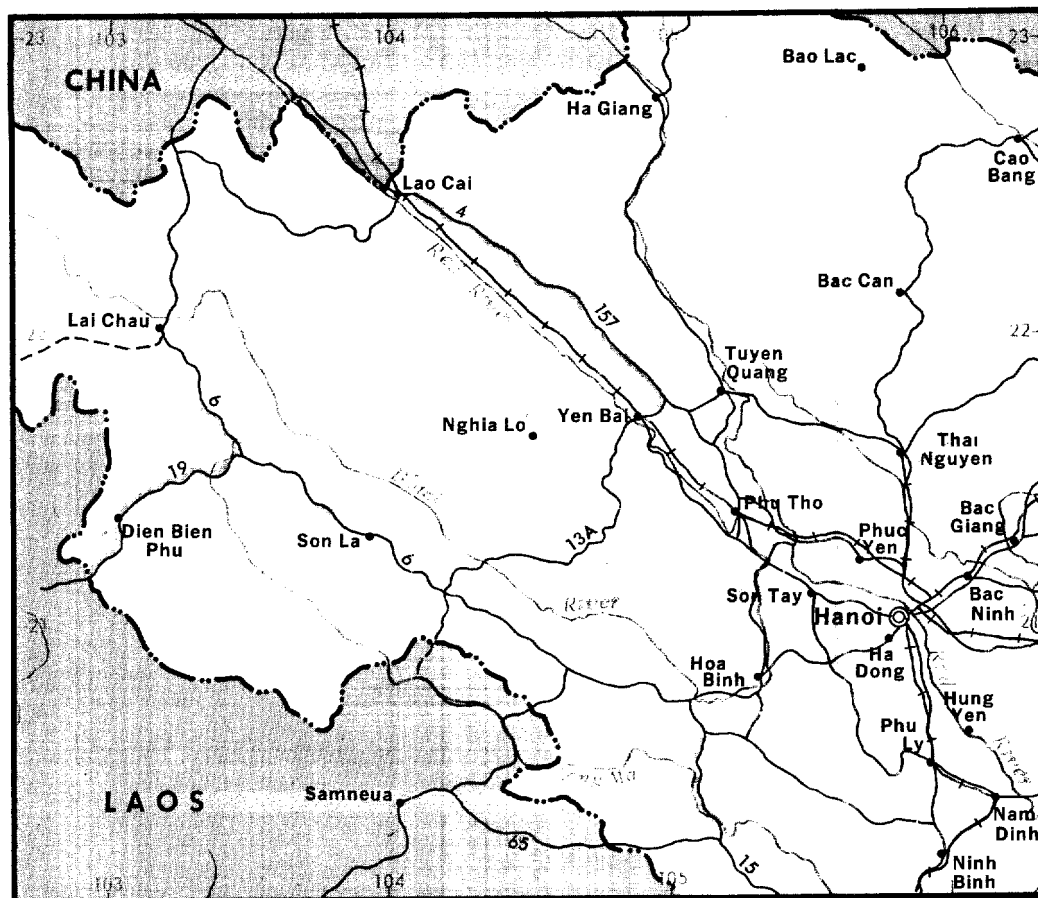
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[REDACTED]

Viet Cong cadre who held an important position in the Da Nang "struggle" movement this spring and is still at large, has been given an elevated rank within the Communist Party structure. This suggests that the Communists intend to make a greater effort to use the "struggle" forces for their own ends.

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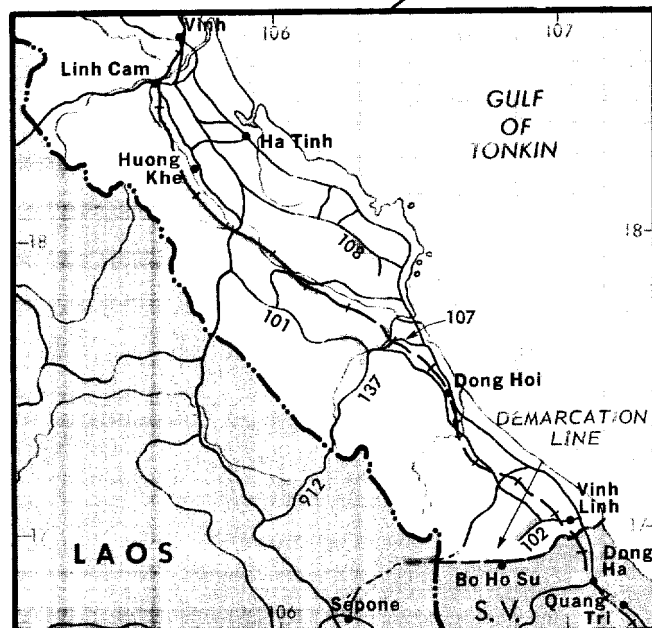
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NEW TELECOMMUNICATION LINES IN NORTH VIETNAM

- Telecommunication line
- +---+ Railroad
- Road
- - - Trail

0 25 50 75 MILES
0 25 50 75 KILOMETERS



III. NORTH VIETNAMESE MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

Petroleum Situation

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1. There is as yet no evidence that the loss of petroleum or petroleum storage and distribution facilities as a result of the bombings of North Vietnam that began in late June has had a measurable effect on the economy of North Vietnam. No shortages of petroleum or dislocations in any sectors of the economy attributable to the loss of petroleum facilities have been observed. Efforts to supply petroleum to North Vietnam have not been characterized by any air of urgency.

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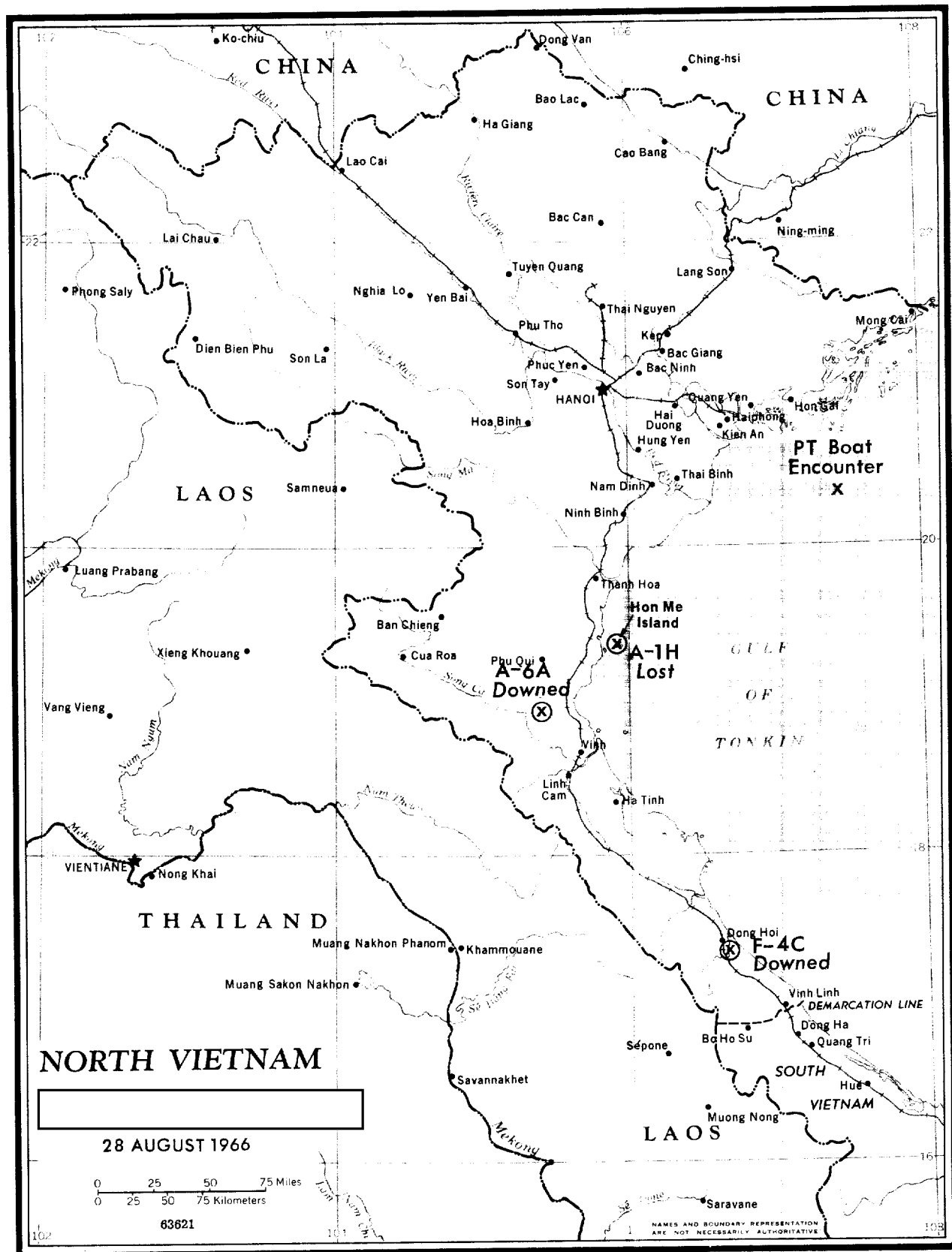
Wireline Construction Activity

3. [REDACTED] indicates that North Vietnam is constructing new wire communications lines within the country and to connect with Laos. All lines observed closely follow transport routes used for deliveries of supplies

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into Military Region 4 or for infiltration into
Laos and South Vietnam

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4. In the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) a line has been observed paralleling an existing infiltration trail westward across the DMZ and extending about one and one-half miles into Laos. Improvement work along sections of this trail has also been observed in recent photography.

5. Other wirelines are located along parts of the new inland transport network under construction in MR 4. In northwestern North Vietnam the lines parallel road improvement work being done between Yen Bai and Lao Kay and they extend into the area of Dien Bien Phu leading toward the Laotian border (see map).

US Air Losses

6. Three US aircraft on strike missions against North Vietnam were lost during the weekend, bringing the total lost from all causes since the air strikes on the DRV began to 384. On 26 August, a flight of two US Navy A-6A aircraft on an armed reconnaissance mission against a target 30 miles northwest of Vinh observed two SA-2 missiles. As the aircraft performed evasive tactics, the wingman observed fire and debris from the lead aircraft. The pilot assumed that a third missile had struck the lead aircraft. Both crewmen were observed to eject successfully. Neither crewman has been recovered and they are listed as missing.

7. On 27 August, one USAF F-4C was downed by AAA fire while on an armed reconnaissance mission

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nine miles east of Dong Hoi. The two-man crew ejected over water and were picked up in good condition by rescue helicopter.

8. On 28 August, a US Navy A-1H from the carrier Oriskany crashed due to unknown causes off the DRV coast near the island of Hon Me. The pilot ejected successfully at sea and was recovered in good condition.

9. US Navy aircraft from the carrier Constellation are reported on 28 August to have attacked three North Vietnamese PT boats off the coast near Haiphong. Preliminary pilot reports indicated that one PT boat was dead in the water and smoking and that the other two were fleeing toward shore.

10. Most of the remnants of the North Vietnamese PT boat fleet have been seeking refuge in Haiphong or other harbors since the encounter with US aircraft in July 1966 in which three PT boats were sunk and 18 North Vietnamese personnel captured.

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS



Eyewitness Report on Conditions in the DRV

3. The evacuation of most government ministries from Hanoi has been confirmed [redacted]

[redacted] the government personnel have been moved to a limestone area near the Song Ba River, southwest of the town of Phu Ly. [redacted] on 18 and 19 August a large portion of Hanoi city was without lights. US air strikes against the Uong Bi power plant on 11 August are estimated to have put that plant out of action for approximately one year. It provided some 25 percent of Hanoi's power.

4. [redacted] a large convoy of tracked artillery pieces heading toward Haiphong from the direction of Hanoi on 12-13 August. It is not clear [redacted] what type of artillery he saw. Soviet-made AAA on tracked vehicles has previously been identified in North Vietnam.

Soviets Train DRV Pilots

5. The Soviet Union has given unprecedented publicity to its program of training North Vietnamese

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jet pilots in the USSR. The 28 August editions of Pravda, Red Star, and Komsomolskaya Pravda featured the graduation of one such group of DRV students at the Soviet Union's "oldest air force school."

the current publicity treatment is highly unusual. This burst of propaganda appears designed in large part to counter Chinese Communist charges that the Soviet Union is not doing all it can to assist Hanoi.

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VI. OTHER MAJOR ASPECTS

1. Additional information on the status of Cambodia's border talks with the Vietnamese Communists has been provided [REDACTED]

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2. [REDACTED]

the negotiations would be prolonged because the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong negotiators are only "intermediaries" with no specific mandate. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] the talks have been plagued by long interruptions while the Communists get new instructions. [REDACTED] the technical aspect of defining the border was proving troublesome and, more importantly, that the North Vietnamese were taking the position that the "present" situation in South Vietnam precludes the territorial concessions which are necessary to clear up ambiguous sections of the border. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] the North Vietnamese are pushing for a rider stating that the boundary will be subject to further examination.

3. This is the first clear indication that the actual fixing of the South Vietnam - Cambodia border is posing a difficult problem. There have been indications that other issues, including the disposition of ethnic minorities and the question of who will sign the agreement, are being contested.

4. It is highly doubtful that Sihanouk will be willing to risk signing an accord with the Vietnamese Communists that still left open the question of border alignment.

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